United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Anita Etzyon
September 3, 2009
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audiotaped interview with Anita Etzyon, conducted by Gail Schwartz on September 3, 2009 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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ANITA EYZYON
September 3, 2009

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: This is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Anita Weingarten Etzyon, conducted by Gail Schwartz on September 3rd, 2009 in Potomac, Maryland. This is tape number one, side A. What is your full name?

Answer: My full name is Anita Etzyon.

Q: And what name were you born with?

A: I was born Anita Weingarten.

Q: And where and when were you born?

A: I was born in 1941.

Q: What -- what day?

A: October 4th, 1941 in a town, or city at that time in Poland. The name of the town is Boryslaw.

Q: All right, let's talk a little bit -- let's talk a little bit about your family, who your parents were.

A: Okay, my father, his name was Marek, in -- in engli -- in America he would probably be called Mark. Marek Weingarten and my birth mom, her name was Ethel Birenbaum from Chelm. Once she married my father, she became Ethel Weingarten.

Q: Ah, let -- let's talk about your father's background, what do you know about that? Where he was from?

A: He was born also in Boryslaw, Poland in 1906. April 25th, 1906, because my son was born 70 years down the road, April 25th, 1976. So I remember that. His background was, from what he told me, is that at one point as a child he was sent away to -- I don't know if it was an orphanage or it was like a youth home for children. And he stayed there for awhile, and I think he was also

schooled in that area. And then he returned. He also told me that his ancestors, or his father, which is actually my grandfather, his father came from Vienna. And in those days they made shidduchim, a shidduch, so he was matched up with my grandmother, who was from Poland, and apparently from Boryslaw. So that's how the famil -- th-the roots of the family came from Vienna into Poland into Boryslaw. And my father became a craftsman, but the word -- what's -- not a mechanic, but what is that called, the people who do fences from metal.

Q: An iron -- an ironworker, or --

A: I-I would say yeah. Worked with iron and created all kinds of things. And then s -- an-and -- and I think also my grandfather was involved in it, but after awhile he gave it up and he decided to assemble bicycles. And he opened a little workshop for himself and he employed his younger brother and he also employed a young man in that workshop and that's what they did, they assembled bicycles and sold bicycles because it -- in those years, that was the mean of transportation, or you had a horse and a carriage, or you took the train. Not too many cars were yet in Poland. But what he told me that his dream was, before the war, to import cars into Poland and develop this -- this -- this whole idea of transportation. Well, unfortunately it didn't work out, World War 2 broke out and those dreams were shattered. The other thing also, which I can mention it, he told me that he also was drafted into the Polish army and he served in the Polish army as a soldier.

Q: What years was that?

A: That is a good question.

Q: Is this the --

A: I think it was -- it must have been -- if he was born in 906, he must have been in his late 20's, I would say, maybe 22 - 24. And -- and he was very good in math, so he told me -- I asked him what was your job there in -- in the Polish army. And he told me it was buchalterie, which means it had to do with papers, and --

Q: Bookkeeping.

A: -- bookkeeping and whatever that was involved in.

Q: Do y --

A: He -- he was fluent in German, and wrote German and he was fluent in -- in -- in the Polish language and wrote and read Polish, so -- you know.

Q: Do you know if he experienced any anti-Semitism in the Polish army?

A: No, he never mentioned that, no, no. But --

Q: Was he a religious man?

A: He came from a religious background, but he was not a religious man at all. He just simply turned away from religion. He felt that religion separates people and that was his outlook on life.

Q: Let's now talk about your mother and how they met, about your mother's background?

A: Yeah, I -- my mother's background --

Q: Your birth -- your birth mother.

A: My birth mother, now I don't know when she was born, but I know that she passed away when she was like 26 - 27, so --

Q: Which means you were how old?

A: Oh, I wasn't even a year old, so if we can add to '41 -- go -- you know, go back. So that must have been --

Q: So she died in 1942?

A: Yeah, yes, she did, right.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: And what do I know about her? From -- very little that whatever my father told me about her. She was a dressmaker and studied in Vienna. And apparently she was a very good one, very talented.

Q: What -- what was her name?

A: Ethel.

Q: And her last name?

A: And her last name was Birenbaum. Ethel Birenbaum. And then, you know, when my father met her -- and I think my father was in his 30's when he got married, I think maybe 33 - 34, something like that.

Q: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

A: And I think they were married a short time, maybe hardly two years and -- and less -- probably less than even two years. But --

Q: [indecipherable] were married, they had you as their child. How did you get the name Anita in Poland?

A: The name Anita, my father said he named me Anita because when he ended up in that orphanage or boys' dormitory, whatever it was, or -- or -- you know, when you send -- it was, I guess, customary in Europe to send children sometimes to go to school away from home, and from what he told me that his family, financially it was difficult for them to raise four children, so they sent him away as a young kid. And he said the woman that attended in that orphanage,

her name was Anita and she was very kind and very nice and he said if ever he will have a child, and she will be a girl, he will name her Anita, and that's how I got the name Anita.

Q: Okay. Obviously you -- you were too young to know what was happening between '41 and '45 in Poland.

A: Right.

Q: Did your father remarry?

A: My father remarried after -- immediately after the war. I was --

Q: Oh, after the war.

A: After, immediately after. Not during the war, after the war.

Q: Okay, let's talk now --

A: Okay.

Q: -- between '41 and '45, which obviously you don't remember. What -- have you --

A: But what I --

Q: -- what have you been told about those years?

A: Okay. Okay, I --

Q: Dealing with your story.

A: Right. I was told that the fellow that worked for my father, he was a Christian and I think a Baptist, he mentioned they were Baptists. And he lived not in Boryslaw, but -- but in a nearby village, apparently not too far. And when the war broke out -- and I was born in '41, in October, it was very difficult to hide with me as a child, and my father approached him. And apparently they were very good friends on top of everything else, and my father approached him and asked him if he would go to his -- he wasn't married yet, but he had a girlfriend, and his girlfriend was

a teacher in that village. And he said, you know, we cannot hide with my baby. Would you be willing to take her? I'll pay you whatever I have, I'll -- you know, my money, and whatever I have in terms of furniture, and anything that I have, I will give you and I'll help you to settle. Talk it over with your girlfriend. And so he did and -- his girlfriend at that time. They said -- she said fine, we marry, but we will have to move to another place because where did this kid come from, you know?

Q: Your -- you --

A: The neighbors would see a baby they would immediately know that they are harboring a Jewish kid. Hiding.

Q: And you're -- you're about a year old now?

A: No, I was less. I must have been like five months, four or five months. Very young, very little.

Q: Oh, I thought you said your birth mother survived for a year after you were --

A: Separate, not with me. She was hidden separately.

Q: Oh, oh.

A: She -- we were -- yeah.

Q: At this time your --

A: At this -- no --

Q: -- your birth mother was still alive?

A: Mi -- at this time my birth mother was still alive, but we were separated. I was given to the Baptist family. Her name was Stefka if I remember correctly. His name I haven't -- I don't know. The guy's name I don't know. Her -- her husband. Which eventually they married and moved to

another town. She was a teacher and apparently she got a job as a teacher. And with my father's financial help that he gave them, they were willing to take me -- and since they had no children, cause they were a young couple. And that's how I ended up with them. But in the meantime --

Q: What -- what town did you -- do they take you to?

A: This I have no clue. My father never mentioned the name and I don't -- even if he did I don't remember the ti -- the town. So I spent with them til 19 -- til the end of the war, which was like 1945.

Q: Do you have any memories of those years? You were only four, obviously, when you --

A: Not quite four, because I think -- what I remember --

Q: Right.

A: -- not the --

Q: You were three, three and a half.

A: -- three and a half.

Q: Any memory --

A: Well, I remember the journey, on a big truck that they came and picked me up with his new wife that my father remarried. I remember -- what I remember after the war, we ended up in a apartment building, in a tall apartment building, and I remember my father brought little Dominoes and we were building something with stacking up the Dominoes and if I'm not mistaken he lit a -- a match and he put like a match in between those Dominoes and somehow I have this image. Whether it really happened, that's what, you know, I don't know. But that's what I remember, sitting in an apartment building once I was apparently taken from the Christian family.

Q: Now, what was happening to your father and your birth mother in those years?

A: Okay. My father told me that he was captured, couple times by the Germans. And the way he told me, that the Germans used to come into the town --

Q: He stayed in Boryslaw?

A: He stayed in Boryslaw. And what they did, they knew -- it was called aksia, like you know, on this and that day the Germans are coming and speaking to the Jewish authorities, the rabbis, whatever it is, we need so many Jewish workers for a certain project. Please make sure that on this and that date they all concentrate in the square, they are ready to go. We build a bridge, or whatever it may be. And my father was pretty clever, he realized that at that time already, you know, there were rumors that they are being sent, but they're not being sent to build bridges or whatever it is. So prior to that aksia he used to run away and escape from Boryslaw. During the time -- I'm going back now -- he managed to hide my mother -- my birth mother and my grandmother with a Christian woman, and he paid her. And what he claimed was, she was hiding was in a hole in the ground where they kept like potatoes and onions over the winter so it shouldn't go rotten, you know, they didn't have fridges in those days yet, so that's where she sat with her mother, day after day after day. And unfortunately she contracted a --

Q: Tuberculosis?

A: Tuberculosis, yes. It started with like emphysema, and you know, they didn't have antibiotics and the conditions were horrible and so forth. And then she developed TB and she passed away. If she would not have contracted TB, she would probably survived.

Q: And your grandmother?

A: And unfortunately when she died in ’42, the Christian lady just chased my grandmother out, she said, I don’t want to keep this old lady, out. And she ended up in one of the concentration camps, and you know the end of it is, you know, death.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: Um --

Q: Boryslaw is near what big city? Is it --

A: It’s near Lvov.

Q: Mm-hm, okay.

A: Drohobycz. In that vicinity.

Q: Yeah.

A: It’s called Doylni slonsk.

Q: Mm-hm, okay.

A: And apparently there was a big Jewish commun -- I mean, I don’t know how big, but it was a r -- a relatively large Jewish community there. And Boryslaw was known for having oil -- oil. So, you know, they were digging for oil and they found oil in Boryslaw, so they had, you know, those --

Q: Derricks?

A: Yes, right there, right.

Q: So now it’s the end of the war and your father comes to get you.

A: Yeah. What my father said, that during the time of the war, when he managed to escape each time there was an aksia --

Q: Right.

A: -- and one time he was even caught and he ran away from -- managed to escape the camp. He used to come periodically to visit me at that village, but I was not supposed to know that he was my father and they gave him a nickname like Chapchuss. You know, whatever, that means nothing. It's -- it's, you know, it's like a blabber word, whatever. So whenever they said oh, Chapchuss is coming to see you. Because in case, if one of the neighbors or Germans would come in, I may say, aw, Marek Wein -- whatever. In order not to have that, he was called Chapchuss. So, that was the name.

Q: What was your new name during the war?

A: Oh, my name was Anna Theresa Beitsko.

Q: And that was the name of the family?

A: And apparently that was their name, yes. I was also baptized, by the way. I was taken to church as a baby and baptized. So it shows you, I must have been a couple months old, you know. I don't know, four or five, something like that. I was baptized and I was their child. Now, after the war, when the war ended, they maybe thought that nobody will survive, cause my mom died, grandma was taken into a concentration camp. They thought my father, who knows, he probably won't survive either. But he did, and so immediately after the war, a law came out in Poland that if there is a parent and there is a child that survived, they have to be united. So that's what happened. He came and -- and me -- remarried immediately after the war and came to claim me. From what he said, they didn't want to give me up, cause they already raised me and I was three and a half, and they ran away, he claimed with me, and they hid someplace. But eventually, you know, the police -- the Polish police, which was, I think, called Enkavide and the Russian police too, together came and they said you -- that's it, you must return the child. He is the

rightful father and, you know. And that's it. And I remember the journey on a truck, in the back of a truck, we were sitting on a truck and my father bought me this huge bear, which wasn't so huge, but it -- in my eyes it was huge and it made moo each time you turned it, and I was petrified. I was so scared of that bear. On the other hand I also got a doll, you know, and that's it. And then we rode on the track to a city called Lignice and we settled there for awhile. There were lots of Russians. I de -- remember, because we lived there already for almost a year, or maybe even a year and a half. So now I started having memories of that place. My father opened a shop, like a deli place and --

Q: Tell me a little bit who your stepmother was.

A: My step-mom is also a survivor. Her name was Clara Bardah from Chelm. She was one of six children. They were five sisters and one brother, and her parents both, Sela -- and I forgot the grandfather's name.

Q: What was her last name? Her mai --

A: Bardah.

Q: So her --

A: Her -- her --

Q: -- maiden name?

A: -- I -- Morgenstern. Her maiden name -- grandmothers -- my step-grandmother, her name was Tela Morgenstern, from Chelm, but then she married, I think his name was Wolfe. This -- her husband's name, last name was Wolfe, but the first name I don't remember calling him grandpa, but not by the first name.

Q: So your stepmother's maiden name was Wolfe? Her father's name?

A: Yeah, yes, yes.

Q: And from Boryslaw also?

A: From Drohobycz.

Q: Oh.

A: Which was a relatively [indecipherable] she was not from Boryslaw.

Q: Okay.

A: From Drohobycz.

Q: Okay. And now you're in this new town with her -- with them --

A: With -- with them --

Q: -- the three of you.

A: Three of us, correct. And I remember our -- they rented an apartment, a big apartment because my step-mom survived, and her sisters survived, five sisters.

Q: Had she been in a camp, your stepmother?

A: No, no, my step-mom, they all managed to get false papers that they are Christians. They all had, except one sister, all had blue eyes. They tied -- you know, they color their hair blonde and they resemble the Irish race, let's put it that way, yeah. This was arranged by one -- from what I learned, what they told me, by one Christian man who worked in the government, who fell in love with one of the sisters. And they were very pretty, that's true, they were beautiful women. Three of them were really gorgeous cause I remember them when they, you know, moved to Israel and so forth, so they were very attractive at that time, too. So I can imagine when they were young, they were probably very attractive. And he managed to arrange for all the five of th

-- four of them to be -- the fifth one could not, because the fifth one was beautiful, but dark hair, brown eyes. You know, she did not look like an --

Q: Ar-Aryan.

A: Aryan, yes. Like the Aryan race, whatever. So with her was a different story. So -- but they worked in a lot of German families as housekeepers.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: And she used to tell us -- she used to tell me, my stepmother it was nerve-wracking, pretending what you are not and acting what you are not and -- and -- you know, and -- so that's how they survived. Now, my grandfather, my step-grandfather, who in Poland, interesting was -- owned farmland. Not that he himself farmed it, but he was a farmer, basically, and that was a little bit unusual for Jews at that time to owe -- own land and be a farmer. But he did, he had a lot of land and you know, they grew potatoes and -- and whatever farmers did grow in those days and he had people who worked on the land. But with hi -- he was very religious. He used to pray three times a day with the Tefillin and all that. And during the war it was very difficult to hide them. So -- but they survived. They said that in the apartment they used to rip off the floor and there was like a sub-floor. And whenever there was an aksia coming, you know, that the Germans are coming to search for Jews, they used to hide them in there, they used to lay flat, board it again, put that carpet on, you know, and they had to lie there quietly, not a peep out of their mouth til the period of the aksia, you know, when -- then at night maybe they lift it up so they could go to the bathroom or whatever. So that's -- that's -- that's basically how they survived. Now, her brother was drafted into the army and sent to the Russian border and he perished there.

Q: So now the three of you, as we said, are in this [indecipherable]

A: In -- in Lignice.

Q: And -- and what are your first memories of that?

A: Well, the fact that my father opened a store, I remember, and I remember Russian soldiers coming in. And in fact I remember there was a toilet and the Russian opened the door. They didn't know what that looked, looked like a sink and they started washing themselves in that toilet. I remember that. I remember even seeing the Russian soldier and I asked my father how come they don't have shoes on. Some of them came, and that was after the war, they had no shoes. They had their feet wrapped with cloth and with, like blankets and tied with a rope and I looked at that, it looked horrible to me because it looked like, you know, something in outer spa -- not normal. Not normal for a child because I already had shoes on and my father had shoes on and here are coming those poor soldiers, you know, and they looked dreadful. I remember that. I also remember not a very pleasant episode in that apartment that we stayed. And apparently there was a hospital not far from there. One night I remember screaming and yelling in Polish, ratumko, and ratumko means save us, save us, save us. Apparently some Russian soldiers, drunk soldiers came into the apartment and started beating on the door. And I remember waking up and opening the door and seeing blood on the door. And I was rushed in very quickly by my step-mom, quickly into the room and I don't know, I think I hid under the bed from fear or what have you. And that's it, that's what I remember.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

A: -- member having a housekeeper in -- in Lignice. She was German, they hired her. And her name was Gertruda. Gertrude.

Q: So your father and stepmother had really nothing against the Germans, as such, they hired this German woman.

A: I don't know. My father felt well, now you as a German -- that's what he said, I said, why did -- at one point, you know, when I was older, I questioned that and he said well, that was my revenge. Now she's gonna work for us. That was his interpretation, or his revenge. She was going to be the housekeeper and she was going to work for us. And I remember her in the kitchen doing the noodles, you know, the old kind where you roll -- made the dough, you rolled it out, and I was watching how she was cutting it into strips. What else? You know, I -- apparently she must have taken care of me. I don't remember much of a relationship with her.

Q: But wi -- talking about relationships, what was your relationship with your stepmother? What did you call her, first of all?

A: Well, I called her Mama.

Q: Yeah, and --

A: She was -- you know, I was told that she is my mother. Now, I must have gone through some traumatic experience because I called her Mama, but I apparently didn't attach myself to her yet as a mama. So I don't remember too much as -- you know, of -- of -- kind of a n -- nurturing time with her. This I don't remember, really. There wasn't such a nurturing time. Maybe Gertrude was supposed to fill it in, but she -- you know, she didn't. So, you know, I -- I'm sure that my physical taking care was taken care of, you know, making sure that I was fed and making sure that I was dressed and combed and bathed or whatever it is, but I really don't remember sitting

and -- you know, and -- and listening to a story or playing some games. Stuff like that I don't remember.

Q: What kind of neighborhood did you and your family live in after the war? Was it a Jewish neighborhood, were there many Jews there?

A: I was -- in Lignice I was sent to a kindergarten, a Jewish kindergarten --

Q: So there were Jews that came back --

A: That came back and apparently settled there because en -- there was a kindergarten there, apparently, because I went to that kindergarten. In fact, I have a little picture of us being on the stage and performing something for Hanukkah. You know, like a song or something, which I have it, and so --

Q: Do you remember -- again, you were very young, any experiences in those early years after the war, of any anti-Semitism?

A: Yes, later on.

Q: Later on, okay.

A: Later on, yes, when we moved from Lignice to another city called Swidnica.

Q: Okay, we'll talk about that, let's finish --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- with Lignice.

A: Yeah.

Q: So you went to school, and you had Jewish friends.

A: And -- and apparently I had some Jewish friends, which I really don't remember much. Course, I don't know, it was -- you know --

Q: You were still very young.

A: -- young, and I don't know whether parents invited kids over like we do today.

Q: Right.

A: I doubt it very much, and those parents that survived after the war, you know, life wasn't easy for them, so who knows how much patience they had to take somebody else in the house an-and be, you know, attentive to them and play with them, or whatever. I know I di -- I had a lot of toys. They bought me a lot of toys after the war.

Q: Did you have any contact, do you know, with that couple that raised you the first three years?

A: No, no, because -- no, because I was told that she is my real mom, my step-mom was my mother. You see, I was in -- it was inculcated into my brain that this is your mother and I am your father. This is your mother. Nothing about the past, that I was raised by a period of my life with a Christian family or that I had a birth mom. No, that was -- that was discovered much later.

Q: Okay.

A: When I was in, oh I would say 14 - 15. I was suspicious already that something is not right, but that was years after.

Q: Yeah, right, later. Did you call the woman who hid you Mama, do you know?

A: I have no -- possibly.

Q: Probably --

A: Probably, yes.

Q: Probably, yeah. So now you're asked to call another person Mama.

A: Mama, yes.

Q: Right.

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Yeah. So you were there for -- in Lignice for a year.

A: I think it may be a year and a half --

Q: And you went to school.

A: -- two, could be. Maybe even two years, close to two years.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

A: And then we moved, and I went there to the -- to the kindergarten.

Q: Right. But your father was not religious --

A: No.

Q: -- so you didn't have any -- did you observe -- again, you were so young -- any holidays, or Shabbat, or nothing?

A: No, not that I remember.

Q: Was your fath -- do -- do you know if your father was Zionist, a Zionist?

A: No. No, he was not.

Q: He was not, okay.

A: No. He was a Polish pat-patriot. He was very into -- he was a Polish patriot. He loved Poland. He had opportunity to leave.

Q: Well that was going to be my next question.

A: Yeah, but he did not. His cousin, his first cousin left in 1939 and came to Washington, and that's how we ended up in Washington, through the first cousin. But my father, no, he didn't want to leave Poland.

Q: Okay.

A: And he didn't want to leave his parents, you know, your commitment to the family, so forth. And maybe also my father was not that adventurous to move, you know, from different languages, you have to start all over. He just didn't -- he wasn't willing to do that.

Q: Now why did they move to a new -- another city? Why did you leave Lignice?

A: I think because -- my feeling -- he never said that, but that was my feeling, since he lived with the sisters and their husbands and my mother with a big family, and I don't know whether he was planning to advance himself in the business area, whatever. He decided he's moving away. So he moved to Swidnica.

Q: And where was that in relation to Lignice?

A: Not that far. Closer to Wrocław, which is another city in Poland. Not that far, in that vicinity, I don't know, maybe half a day drive or something like that. And ha -- why did he do that I don't know, but I know one thing. Where -- in Swidnica he opened immediately a business with a man, a Christian man who -- whose specialty was he -- to manufacture candies, all kinds of candies. And so they [indecipherable] together and they opened a factory that produced chocolates and candy varieties, all kinds of varieties of sweets and a store in front that sold the products that they manufactured. And that's what my father did, and this I remember very well, because I must have been close to seven years old already, six and a half. I remember coming to the store. I remember my father arranging all those gorgeous, beautiful candy boxes with -- with ribbons and what have you, chocolates and all kinds of candies, hard candies, soft candies, chocolates, small chocolates, you know. All kinds of sweets and delicatessen, you know, all kinds of specialties. And it went very well, because after the war people were extremely hungry

and they craved all those things that they didn't have. So he did very well in that respect and we were in Poland, in Swidnica until 1951.

Q: What kind of neighborhood did you live in in -- in Swidnica?

A: In Swidnica I lived, not necessarily in a Jewish neighborhood, no. I also went to school there, first grade and second grade.

Q: Was this a public school, or --

A: Public school.

Q: So you were with child --

A: And I was the only Jewish kid in the whole school.

Q: In the whole school?

A: The whole school.

Q: So what was that like for you?

A: Terrible.

Q: Can you relate some of the --

A: Yes, yes.

Q: -- experiences that you had?

A: I tell you it was terrible because I had a very good friend, her name was Krisha and she was Christian. And she used to ask me, are you Jewish? I said no, I'm Christian. And I used to go with her to church after school. I re -- that was in first grade.

Q: Now, you said that because you thought you were Christian, or you thought it would be safe to --

A: Don't forget --

Q: -- to say --

A: Don't forget that the three and a half or four years of my life --

Q: Right, that's what I meant.

A: -- I was brought up as a Christian.

Q: Okay.

A: And I believed in it.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it was --

Q: So at that point you still felt you were a Christian?

A: I -- yes. It was so inculcucated into me that no matter what they said, I -- apparently there was some ritual that I was taught as a little kid, you know, that I had to hold my hands together and say a prayer before I go to sleep, and these things and that stayed with me for a pretty long time. So I was -- I'm the only Jewish kid in -- in the whole school and the teachers knew about it, that I'm Jewish, you know, I'm not a Christian. But I wouldn't accept that. I wanted to be like all the rest of the kids in school, in the classroom. And I remember a priest -- we -- we had in Poland at that time, religious lessons in -- in -- in -- in school. And I remember the priest used to come and he used to say, Anita, up and leave the class. And I used to burst out in tears, because this was a religious --

Q: Instruction?

A: -- instruction, and I -- and I just wanted to participate like everybody else. And I started crying and he said, okay, stay. So I stayed. I remember that. And --

Q: Did you have any negative experiences? Anti-Semitic expressions to you?

A: Well, the only anti-Semitic expressions is what -- with this questioning if you are -- am I Jewish? Are you Jewish, or are you Christian? And I used to say no, I am Christian.

Q: But nothing -- but nothing negative, that's what I meant.

A: No, not negative, you know, pointing to me that I'm a Jew or something like that, no, no. What I do remember is at the end of, I think it's the second grade, everybody got -- every child got a book -- that's my husband -- every child got a book as a gift. I got the most smallest, little, tiny book. Everybody got nice, big books as a gift at the end of the year and I just got a tiny little one.

Q: Because the books they got were Christian books?

A: They were Polish books, all kinds of stories.

Q: Oh.

A: No, not necessarily religious books, no, no, no. But as a gift, as a token to the student, and I got a little one. And of course I came home and I carried on and so my father and my step-mom went to school and they said, how come you gave her such a little book and all the other kids got big ones, she got just a little one, you know. And I don't know if that was an indication of whatever. I have no clue. This is what I remember. And other than that --

Q: But you felt confident going out on the street, that you would -- your parents thought it would be -- you were safe to go out on the street?

A: Not so confident, I mean, from school I walked with that girl, Krisha. And we went to church after school.

Q: Oh, you did go to church?

A: Yes, after school we went to church and after that I went home. So sometimes she used to come to me. I had a feeling that, you know, she used to come and play but not as often as I wanted her to come, so maybe the parents were not so happy that she associates with a Jewish kid or whatever, I don't know. They probably did know that I'm not Christian, even though I keep on saying that I was [indecipherable]

Q: What was -- and what was the Russian presence in your town at that time?

A: The Russian presence I remember only in Lignice, not in Swidnica.

Q: Okay.

A: In Swidnica I don't remember the Russian presence -- presence at all, not at all. But what happened after 1951 when we -- when we left Poland and immigrated to Israel is that the Russians were coming into Poland apparently and chopping down all the private initiatives.

Q: Okay, why did your -- y-y say you stayed there til '51.

A: Yeah.

Q: Why did your father and stepmother make the decision to leave?

A: The decision they made to leave was because her sisters started immigrating to Israel. No, sorry, no, no, no, no, they came after us, no. The reason -- you know, it's funny because now I remember that once my stepmother said that one of the reasons was because I was so engrossed into Catholicism as a kid. She said that's one of the reasons -- she -- she said that eventually I'll end up marrying out of faith and that's it. So she said, now the Russians are already in Poland, they're coming in, they're shutting the private initiatives, no more businesses. You will have to close your business, your private business. Here is one reason and the other reason is that the kids will grow up -- because in the meantime I had a half sister that was born.

Q: When was she born?

A: ’48 or ’49.

Q: And her name?

A: Her name was Henrika. Henrika, but her Hebrew name is Balia. Okay. And I think basically that -- that’s what drove them to come to Israel. Now, whether my father was a Zionist, I’m telling you the truth, nope. And he knew it’s going to be hardship -- oh, there’s something flying here -- so --

Q: Was your stepmother a Zionist?

A: More than my father.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yeah.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Yes.

Q: Did -- did you want to wear a crucifix, a cross?

A: Yeah, yes.

Q: Do you remember ask -- asking your folks if you could?

A: They were not too happy, but I wore it.

Q: Oh, you did wear it?

A: I wore it with Mary Magdalena. Not the crucifix, but Mary with the baby. That’s what I had on my -- on my neck, yeah.

Q: Yeah. They let you do that?

A: They let me, yes. And then after awhile they started not letting me. I remember that, it was a big fight all ways. I always used to pin next to my bed, which had like, in those days had wooden bars. I used to pin Jesus, picture of Jesus and Mary Magdalena with her hands this way, that way, you know. Yeah.

Q: So what did -- before you left for Israel, what did Israel mean to you? Did you have any idea what it was, where it was?

A: Yeah, I -- my father used to say a barren land, nothing to eat, desert, it's gonna be rough, rough times. You know, he pictured it very bleak.

Q: But was willing to go.

A: But went yeah, yeah. I think he actually wanted to come to United States, that was his dream, to come to America, but it did not materialize for him because -- I tell you the episode why. He could have come the United States immediately after the war, because his cousin, his first cousin who lived in Vienna, and he managed to escape in '39, that's what I was told, and came directly to Washington, through family that arranged this for him, because in those days you just couldn't come.

Q: You needed a sponsor.

A: You needed a sponsor and it had to be a quota too. So I don't know how, whether he had a quota, or maybe somebody really sponsored him with big chunk of money and said if something happens, Jake Schutzman will [indecipherable] us, don't worry. So he arrived in '39 and immediately after the war, there was a contact between my father and him. And my father started with his business in wa -- in -- in Lignice and things were going well for him and he made good money and so forth. And he received a package from my cousin -- his -- his -- his cousin, which

was my second cousin, a package of clothing and he opened it up and he said, oh my God, what a collection of some shmatas. What is he sending me, some shmatas? This is America, he says. This is -- this is what life is in America? That's what -- I mean, here I have decent clothes, I -- I mean, it's a different life that I live than -- this is th -- you know, that was his impression for some reason. And Jake Schutzman instead, sent him a letter and sent him papers to fill out at that time and deposit it in the American embassy. He did that, but much later. I don't know, some years went by, maybe three, four years went by by the time you went and deposited those papers in the American embassy. And -- and then he couldn't, in '51, immigrate to United States because Poland -- Poland had a quota of so many people America would accept from Poland. And then you had to have a sponsor. So sponsor was Jake, but his financial situation at the beginning, in '51 wasn't great. He wasn't that long in United States in order to sponsor, and so the other option was only going to Israel.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So --

Q: When did you leave -- when did you leave for Israel?

A: 1951, and I think it was in April. We l -- we left by boat and we arrived in Haifa and I was not quite 10, so you know, I remember the trip, which was horrible, I was so sick. The ha --

Q: What boat do y -- do you remember the boat's name?

A: Megbah. Yes, the boat was called Megbah. I remember I was sick the whole week from Italy, because from Poland to Italy we rode a train. And from Italy we took a boat. And I remember they dressed me, and I'm not exaggerating, with eight or nine dresses, one on top of the other, and on -- because taking stuff from Poland, you couldn't take everything you wanted to, they

rationed you. You couldn't take your wealth that you have accumulated, so you had to be very clever, how do you maneuver to get stuff out that, you know, is yours, that you earned it, you know, over the years. So I remember arriving in Israel --

Q: We-Were you very unhappy about leaving Poland?

A: You know, I don't remember that. No, I don't think I was unhappy. The idea of -- of riding a train and changing and you know, apparently maybe appealed to me. And there were also pictures from United Jewish Appeal, I remember. You know, they were asking for donations and we used to get those cards, and I used to look at the cards and they looked very fascinating, very nice, so from what my father said, barren land, and desert and nothing, and here are cards that show farmers working, orange trees with oranges, lemons, it -- you know, it was -- it was appealing to a youngster.

Q: So now you land in Haifa.

A: Yeah, land in Haifa, sweating like anything.

Q: Do you remember what your parents' reaction was when the boat --

A: Yes.

Q: -- landed and they got on ground?

A: Yes, yes, yes --

Q: Israeli ground.

A: -- right. My fa -- my father was dressed in a suit with a hat with a kapeloush. My mother was dressed to perfection. She had a suit on, and a hat, and she had shoes made by a shoemaker in Poland. You know in those days everything was custom made. You didn't go to a shop lu -- like we go here to the mall. She had on her, I'll never forget that, a fox. You know fox?

Q: Right, wa --

A: -- with the -- ye-yeah --

Q: -- with the head and the --

A: -- a circ --

Q: -- with the head and the tail.

A: Yeah, with the tail, silver fox, black and silver, very pretty, I remember that. And the first thing, they put us in a big room and they started taking fleet it's called like a fleet, where they disinfect you.

Q: They sprayed you.

A: Sprayed us. And my father, he got so uptight and nervous and he started screaming, what do you think I'm coming from, the jungle? What are you fleeting me? You know, and what do you think we are, barbarians? And you know, it didn't help much, everybody, no matter where you came from, whether you came from Yemen or Iraq or Tunisia or Sahara or Poland or Germany, fleet everybody was fleeted. And then --

Q: Let -- let's back up a little bit.

A: Yeah?

Q: Were the other people on the boat coming over, were they Polish Jews coming to Israel?

A: Yes, yes, Polish Jews.

Q: And di --

A: Right.

Q: Were there many children on that boat?

A: This, to be honest with you, I don't remember because I was so sick, seasick.

Q: Oh, what -- yeah, right, yeah.

A: I don't think there were that many kids there, no.

Q: So it isn't that you talked with other children?

A: No --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- no, no.

Q: What language were you speaking?

A: Polish.

Q: Only? That's all you knew?

A: That's all I si -- knew, right.

Q: And your parents spoke to you in Polish, okay.

A: Polish, yeah, they spoke Polish.

Q: So now you landed in Israel and you only know Polish.

A: And I o -- only know Polish, that's right.

Q: Okay, but you got sprayed.

A: And I -- we got all sprayed and we were put into a big tent because they didn't have enough housing in '51 to accommodate the -- the Aliyah, you know, the incoming Jews. And in that tent, I remember that, there was no floor, it was just earth.

Q: Wa -- where was this in --

A: Haifa.

Q: You were still in Haifa?

A: In Haifa, yes, Haifa. And we received like a bed, everybody got a bed, a folding bed, like army bed with a blanket, and I think a pillow. And my father also brought food, by the way from Poland. I remember four jars, red jars, like milk jars, big ones, with schmaltz. Also dried mushrooms on a string, couple strings of that because there was no -- because we came at a time that it was called senna, there was no food. Food was rationed in Israel at that time. And also sausages. But the kind that are dried, i -- where you don't have to refrigerate also. Strings of sausages. And I remember Daddy took a hammer and a nail from someplace and he hammered it to the pole of the tent and hung the sausages and the mushrooms and that the containers were put aside. In that tent there were -- we were there, another Romanian family from Romania, which we could not communicate and two other families from Yemen, which we could not communicate. The Yemenite Jews that came, they were dressed entirely different than those from Europe. And evening c-came, suppertime, they all sat on the floor and they put this big tray and they started eating with their hands. And my father and my step-mom, when they saw that, they got up and they went real close to look and they spoke to each other in Polish and they called me to see. Look, look, take a look, look how they eat. I haven't seen anything like it. You sit on the ground and you eat with your hands. Where am I, he said. I came to like nomad lands. This -- what is this, you know? He maybe envisioned in his head that it's going to be more European but it's not, it's a mixture of Jews from all over the world. You know, and that was very hard for him. We stayed there five days.

End of Tape One, Side B

Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Anita Etzyon. This is tape two, side A, and we were talking about your staying in the tent and watching the family eat and the -- your father's response. The family from Yemen.

A: Ah, right, yes. It was a cultural shock, I would say, to my father and my step-mom. They had not seen it. There were no televisions yet in those days. Maybe if there would be, you know, they would have seen different cultures, how people eat and how people interact, but it was very strange for them.

Q: Were there partitions in the tent?

A: No.

Q: So it was one open area?

A: One open area, yes.

Q: So it was you and your parents and your sister --

A: Right.

Q: -- with these other two families.

A: With the other three families.

Q: O-Other three families.

A: There were four families in a tent.

Q: Right.

A: And then we stayed there a few days and my step-mom had a cousin in Israel by the name Yakov or Kuba Morgenstern. And he lived in a village called -- at that time it was called Sidney Ali, which -- which is an Arabic name and Arabs apparently lived there. Later on it became Nofti

Yam, was named Nof Yam. But I remember it as Sidney Ali. And he took us from -- from Haifa, from that absorption camp to the home that he lived, and he lived in a Arab home, which was left by the Arabs that left the area. It was an Arab home and we received a room downstairs and his apartment was upstairs. And we lived there, I think two or three months.

Q: Were you starting to pick up Hebrew?

A: Very little, even though there was some kind of a school there, and it was like one room school and there were like three or four [indecipherable]. This was first grade, this was second grade, this was third grade and fourth grade. So we were like, you know, different ages in one room, basically.

Q: When you -- let's back up to the absorption center, were there other Polish families there that you could speak to?

A: There must -- there probably were, but I was not in contact with, I was with my family most of the day.

Q: Okay.

A: And -- and I think my father left couple times just to see what he can do in Israel, what -- you know, what kind of a job can he get, what can he do? So he was trying to reach, apparently, some contacts with people and -- and that's how my stepmother contacted this cousin of hers and that's how we managed -- you know, he managed to kind of take us out from the absorption. And then we stayed with him two or three months, not that long. And th-then we had to move to another -- it's called in Hebrew Ma'barah, which is another absorption built for Olim Chadashim, which are the newcomers. And we lived there for almost two years.

Q: What -- where was that?

A: It was ca -- it was called Ma'barot gelee. It was in Herzliya on the way to Tel Aviv on the main highway at that time, which was not quite a highway, it was like a dirt road in a sense, but that's how it was. And we lived there for two years. It was one room, made out of tin with a -- with a base that was made out of concrete. The walls were made out of tin. And when it rained it was like playing orchestra on top of your roof. We stayed there for two years. My father also brought from Poland, I must say, furniture. My father brought a whole lift. Where was I?

Q: You were -- yo-you had moved to the new --

A: Yeah, Ma'barot gelee --

Q: Ma'barah.

A: Ma'barah.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And my father emi -- you know, he was at that time very depressed, I must say, very depressed. Even in Boryslaw, which was not a very wealthy Jewish community there, he never lived in such conditions, where you live in one little room with -- you know, made out of tin -- pach, in Hebrew, really. And you know, and there were winds and rain and it was just miserable. But, you know, as a kid, no matter where you stuck a kid, it's okay. You know, children are busy doing their stuff, running around, you meet children, you get -- start playing. Even if I wasn't able to communicate, I still remember having couple friends there, because we -- we were all olim, we were all newcomers.

Q: Were there ones from Poland?

A: No --

Q: Okay, so --

A: -- no, no, no.

Q: -- so you were picking up Hebrew ne --

A: Slowly, yes. I was picking up slowly Hebrew.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: But not to a degree that I was able to converse yet, or having a whole conversation.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I was picking it up. And --

Q: Did you go to school?

A: Yes, I went to school there, right. Again, it was a very similar situation in -- and we had like few of those barracks or whatever, those one rooms that were -- in one room you could have two grades, or three grades and one teacher would, you know, teach us. My father brought furniture from Poland, a lift. He was able to ship a lift. We had it for a long time, I remember, a whole bedroom set and a whole living room set with dining table and four chairs. Clothing, and also money, he was able to bring money and wa --

Q: So this arrived in the port of Haifa?

A: N -- e -- that arrived in the port of Haifa eventually. I don't think it arrived with us, because then it was transported -- this arrived a little bit later and it was transported to the absorption Ma'barot gelee, where we lived for two years. And I remember my father build another room by himself to house this lift, cause there were a couple big boxes that he built in Poland, you know to hou -- to put the furniture in. He did that. My stepmother was very resource -- resourceful in that respect. She remembered from home because her father owned land and he was a farmer, so what she did, she -- my father made her a big fence around that area that we lived. They fenced a

piece of property, he could have done that, and she started a little farm of her own, with chickens and -- and ducks and -- and boy I remember and -- and turkeys, we had, and I remember how she used to hatch them, take those eggs and -- and put them in a basket and put a hen that was ready to sit on the eggs and -- and inc -- then the eggs incubated and then we had more chickens. And I was in charge of the ducks, I remember. And since our -- our serif, that's what it was, it's -- it's that ha -- little hat, was at the end and -- and at the end was a orange grove, a big orange grove. So I used to go with the ducks and -- and whatever was there, I had a little stick, you know, like a shepherd girl. Used to take -- there were four of them, they were pretty big, they are not the little ducks, they are those -- they look like swans in a sense, but they were --

Q: Geese? Were they geese?

A: Geese, geese. Four of them. They were very aggressive, that's what I remember. Anybody who came by they would attack, like a dog, you know, it's interesting. So I used to take those geese to the orange orchard and they used to pasture there. There was like a big pipe that they used to water those trees. And water used to drip in a little -- and it formed like a little basin or something and those geese used to go and drink and eat the grass around and so forth. And I loved it, I remember that, that was just wonderful. And so you know, living in Ma'barah for me wasn't difficult at all, I enjoyed it. I remember sh -- my mother planted corn and potatoes and I remember there was a mole who used to come and eat the potatoes and we were fighting that mole, you know, with -- with the hoes and water into this -- into their grooves that they made underground, what have you. So for me I -- I enjoyed it. I -- I -- it didn't bother me at all living in a -- in hut.

Q: Did you miss Poland?

A: No, no. I didn't miss Poland, not at all. I remember taking the dishes -- for instance, you couldn't wash dishes in this one hut, cause even though my father made a kitchen, but it was very difficult to wash the dishes, so I used to take like a basket or -- or a big pail with the dirty dishes and they built like a long --

Q: Trough? A trough?

A: A trough with faucets and everybody used to come and polish and wash their dishes there. Another thing was, at the beginning when we moved into the -- Ma'barah, you didn't have your private shower, so we all had to shower in a public shower that they built, you know, and they didn't make it compartmentalized separate. They made -- you know, they put those showers and everybody in, you know, and my father and my mother they just -- they couldn't. So this -- first thing my father did after he built that room was immediately to put up a shower so he doesn't have to go and shower. He was in that -- very handy. I must say he was very handy to put up a room to house his furniture, to build the fence, to build a chicken coop for the chickens. So, you know, make a little kitchen for my mom so she can cook and make a shower for us. Now, the bathroom had to be a public bathroom and so, you know, we used this public bathroom, which wasn't a bathroom like we are used to it, it was a hole. A huge hole in the ground and you know, there were like four compartments, but there was a wall that separated those four, so thank God for that. And I remember petrified going to the bathroom. Why? Because when I looked into the hole, I said oh my God, if I fall in there -- and I was small, you know, I wasn't a big kid or something. My God, if I fall into this hole. That was very, very scary. That was something that I remember til today, the fear of going to the bathroom, but you had to. You didn't have another facility. So we lived there two years and in the meantime they managed to buy an apartment,

which was in the process of being built, and it took almost, I don't know, a year or so to finish it, so that's why we stayed there almost two years. And then we moved to Herzliya, to a place called no -- a -- Noht Sarah, the dwellings of Sarah. It was a 40 -- 40 unit apartment, a long one, a three story building.

Q: At this time did you feel Israeli or Polish?

A: No, I still felt Polish.

Q: You still felt very Polish.

A: Yes, very Polish.

Q: Not -- not Israeli.

A: Not Israeli.

Q: But I imagine after two years your Hebrew was much [indecipherable]

A: Was much better, right, and then I went ow -- enrolled -- they enrolled me in fifth grade elementary school. I was already -- by then I was 12 and I went into fifth grade. I was always a year ahead of the others. When they were 11 in fifth grade, I was 12 in fifth grade. And maybe because of the lack of --

Q: Language.

A: -- language barrier and so forth, so you know, I couldn't keep up with the material. And by then I already knew Hebrew and I was slowly acclimating myself. And luckily was that in Herzliya there were a few other kids that were not born sabras and that was a big thing in those days, to be an Israeli. And here, I don't know if you heard or not, but the Israelis were not too happy accepting the new immigrants and they called them, you know, in Hebrew they called them subonim, which means soaps, like you -- you know, subonim. And they also wi -- didn't

accept them, you know, they stuck together. And for me it was very important to penetrate that and become like one of them and not be this Polish immigrant.

Q: Let's talk about what did your pe -- did you know what happened to the Jews during World War II and a -- and do you know what your -- or did your parents talk to you about it and what were their reactions when they heard all the terrible things after the war was over. Obviously they waited til you were older.

A: Yes. Whether they talked much about it at that time -- they mentioned it from time to time, that we are all survivors and so forth.

Q: What did being a survivor mean to a young girl? Or wa-was that later on, when you were older?

A: To be honest with you not -- I wasn't very proud of it at that time in Israel, that I'm a survivor, you know, because --

Q: But why weren't you pr --

A: -- because in school, sometimes even the teachers when they were teaching, they were saying oh, those Jews, they went like sheep to slaughter. They did not resist, they did not fight. Because in Israel the young generation, the soldiers, the Haganah, the [indecipherable] all of them, they were fighters, they fought. Now the Jews in Europe, there was a resistance in ghetto Warsaw we know and -- and other places, but they felt that the Jews went like sheep to slaughter, and -- and we were part of that -- you know, part of those Jews who somehow managed to survive, but you know -- so these were -- I -- I -- in fact I remember one of my teachers also said that, that the Jews went like sheep to slaughter and I came home and I said it to my parents. And they were very upset and they went and they talked to the teacher how, you know, whatever. But that was

the -- that was the attitude of -- of the Israelis in those days, you know. We are the sabras, we are the born Israelis and you know, proud an-and you know, and tall and strong and whatever. Free.

Q: Did the -- did the children talk to you like that, or just the adults?

A: No, some of the children.

Q: And did you answer them, or did you know what to say, or --

A: At that time I don't think I knew what to answer.

Q: Y-yeah. Right.

A: No, I don't think I knew what to answer.

Q: Did you have feelings of inferiority at that point?

A: Yes, yes, that I was different, that my folks spoke Polish at home, which bothered me a lot, we --

Q: Were they learning Hebrew?

A: They were learning, but fa -- it was so difficult for them, because it's a Semitic language and -- and -- and they just couldn't, you know, so they continued speaking Polish and -- and my father wasn't very happy the first couple years living in Israel, so he didn't make the effort to acclimate himself into the society. So they had their Polish friends, which they communicate only in Polish. And -- and the other thing was that also when you went shopping -- well you didn't have supermarkets then, but we had grocery shops, so the grocer spoke Yiddish, or German or Polish or whatever, so --

Q: Di-Di-Did your family know Yiddish at all?

A: Yes, they did, but they did not speak it.

Q: So you -- did you know Yiddish?

A: No, no, because wa -- they did not speak Yiddish. But later on I picked up somehow by, I don't know, I picked up the language, not that I'm fluent, but maybe because through my language, my mother-in-law spoke Yiddish and Russian and so --

Q: But when you were younger you didn't [indecipherable]

A: No, when I was younger, no, I didn't speak any Yiddish at all. But my father spoke German and my step-mom probably spoke a little bit German, too.

Q: Yeah.

A: So -- but the base -- the language they spoke at home and the language we communicated --

Q: Was Polish.

A: Was Polish. And when I had friends coming in, that came over to visit, was only Polish. I used to say, why don't you speak Hebrew, they don't understand what you're saying, you know. It did upset me, you know, but that was the reality, I couldn't change it.

Q: Did you have young friends who were sabras?

A: Yes.

Q: So they did accept?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Yeah, mm-hm.

A: Yeah. Right, they did. After awhile they did.

Q: They did.

A: Yes. After awhile they did.

Q: So now you're in your apartment in Herzliya.

A: Right, and I'm going --

Q: And going to school.

A: -- t-to elementary school in Herzliya.

Q: And doing anything else? Did you do sports, did you --

A: Well, within the school, you know the activities that we had.

Q: And still no religious affiliations?

A: No, not at all. Not at all. My parents turned 360 degrees away from religion, both of them. And they didn't really celebrate the holidays. Luckily they were in Israel, so I knew there was this holiday, that holiday, you know, through school and so forth.

Q: But nothing in the home.

A: Nothing at home, no, nothing at home.

Q: And so life went on in Herzliya.

A: Right, life went on and then I went to the high school in -- in Herzliya as well and became quite -- you know, quite, involved in the social life of school and had a number of fu -- good friends. And then, after --

Q: A-At that point I assumed you felt Israeli, not Polish?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: It's high school.

A: That -- it was high school already, right. But, was interesting when I spoke Hebrew. I have an accent, a Polish accent in the Hebrew language and my pronunciation, you know, the R, raiche, you can hear raiche. The Israeli sabras, they don't have the raiche, they have the raiche. So you could tell that this is not a sabra because her raiche is not raiche, it's raiche.

Q: Right.

A: You know. Other than that, you know, I was -- I felt fine. I felt like any other Israeli.

Q: And then?

A: And then I went to a school called Seminare aki Butsim. After two years of high school in Israel, I transferred to Tel Aviv to study in --

Q: With your family, or without your family?

A: No, without my family. They lived -- we lived in Herzliya but I communicate -- I commuted to Tel Aviv, to Seminare, which -- which prepared you to be a teacher, and I was there for four years, so it was a continuation. And the reason why I switched was because in those days, and I think it's today the same story, if you finish high school, you go to the army. Now, if you stop high school after two years, which is the 10th grade and you transfer to a Seminare and you finish the two years of high school in the Seminare plus two years in the same Seminare tea -- becoming a teacher, then you are not -- your education is not interrupted and you don't go to the army. Now, but when you finish the Seminare and you are not married, you go to the army. So happened I met my husband in the last year of Seminare aki Butsim. And I'll never forget he said to me, okay -- I said, you know that at the end of the year I have to go to serve, to the army. He said [indecipherable] you'll serve in my army. And we got married and that --

Q: How -- how did you meet your husband?

A: I met my husband at a wedding that -- in the meantime my father got established in Israel and he picked up a trade which I don't know whether he learned it in Israel or maybe he had some idea with another par -- par -- partner and he became a -- oh my God, listen -- hm -- plumber, with another partner and Israel was -- at that time they were building Israel so he was doing all the installations to the new homes in Herzliya and -- and so, you know, he did pretty well,

worked very hard, you know, wasn't young any more. Took him at least five or eight years by the time he managed to open a little business with this partner of his. And -- and you know, and we lived in Herzliya and --

Q: And your sister stayed -- stayed in Herzliya [indecipherable] younger --

A: Oh y -- absolutely, the younger one, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: She is by eight years younger than me.

Q: Yeah, mm-hm.

A: Yeah, eight years, I think. Seven or eight years.

Q: Yeah.

A: And yeah, she stayed in Herzliya and went to school and --

Q: So you met -- you met your husband at a wedding.

A: And my -- I -- at a wedding and it was a wedding of one of the builders that was marrying her son and my father was very insistent that I should go too to that wedding, and I didn't want to. Because you have to understand that in Israel when you are 18, you are very self sufficient. You don't go with your parents. And I said, I should go with you? And that makes sense. I don't want to go, I don't want to go. He said no, you should come, you should see a builder, he is a very well-to-do man and a beautiful wedding and we're all invited and -- all right. So we wen -- I went to the wedding with them and I wasn't very happy because I had to sit with them and it was boring, and interesting. I'm -- I'm going to back up now. When we came to Israel in 1951 there was a family from Boryslaw that my father remembered. He was not in contact with this man, but he knew that he immigrated to Israel. His name was Joseph Holzman. He immigrated to

Israel as a youngster when he was 17, before World War II. Left the family, his father, I think died at a -- at the front fighting, I think, I don't know if it was the Pole [phone ringing] This man, Joseph Holzman, who was born in Boryslaw and my father knew him from Boryslaw, but there was not really a contact between the two til my father arrived in Israel, and he said, I have to find this man, I want to see what he does here so maybe he can guide me what to do in Israel. And so this man Joseph Holzman, in Herzliya by the beach had a motel, a little motel and that was his business. And so I remember I was -- we just -- you know, we just arrived in Israel and we were living in the -- in that Sidney ali that I mentioned, which is close to where they lived and had their motel, so we went there one evening, and -- all of us, and you know, they spoke about whatever. And that's it. And maybe he gave my father some advice and we left and that's it. And there was never a contact any more. At the wedding his wife, Joseph's wife came to the wedding. He wasn't there because he stayed in the motel cause they had guests and he had to attend to the guests that they had. And -- but his wife was with her son at the wedding. And we were ready to leave the wedding and go back home, it was around 11 o'clock and we had to catch the last bus from Tel Aviv, and so -- where the wedding took place. And Mrs. Holzman saw my father and she remembered him, she said, hello Mr. Weingarten, how nice to see you, blah, blah, blah, and I'm standing in the back. And she asks, and this is your daughter? And my father said yes, and he introduced -- introduce yourself. So I introduced myself. She looked at me, grabbed me by the hand and she said, I have a very nice son, and I want you to meet him. And that was it, and the rest is history.

Q: And -- and that's how you met your future husband?

A: That's how I met my future husband and we started dating and that's it, and it ended up in marriage.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: And your name is now Etzyon, and --

A: Etzyon, correct.

Q: -- and how did that happen that it was not Holzman?

A: Because at that time it was very fashionable in Israel not to have a rooted Israeli name. Not Holzman, not Weingarten. Many, many families I remember at that time changed their names to Hebrew names. And in fact, I went through that period too with my folks. I said, why don't you change from Weingarten, which is a vineyard, and change it to Karmi. Karmi is a [indecipherable] name of a vineyard. Why do we have to be called Weingarten? So that was a period that a lot of Israelis went through, and changed their names. And I think what happened also at that time, our Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, when he sent people overseas, diplomatic excursions or whatever, representing Israel, he wanted them to have Hebrew names and not names that were carried from the Diaspora or what have you, yes.

Q: So you got married after how long? How long did you know your husband?

A: Seven months, we got married, and --

Q: And you didn't have to go into the army.

A: And then I didn't have to go to the army, yes.

Q: And then where did --

A: And he says I'm still serving.

Q: And where did y --

A: Yeah.

Q: Where did you live?

A: Herzliya.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: In a -- a little town called Kfar Shmaryahu. We lived there, my husband received a house from his folks. And we lived in that little house for almost three years. And in 19 -- and my daughter was born in Israel.

Q: Were you working at all, were you teaching?

A: I just taught for one year in Israel, in elementary school. And then my daughter was born, so I stopped.

Q: And your husband was doing what?

A: My husband worked for an Israeli company doing refrigeration. Yes, refrigeration that was called Ampa, and that was his trade. And in 1963 we immigrated to America.

Q: Why?

A: This cousin, Jake Schutzman, who sent papers to my father in Poland, which took few year for my father to deposit it in the American embassy. Things were forgotten, years went by, nobody thought about it. It was just erased. One day my father receives a letter from the American embassy. They are sum -- summoning him to come -- calling him to come to the American embassy. He went -- he didn't say anything to us -- he went to the American embassy to find out why are they inviting him. And -- completely slipped his mind, this whole episode what he did in Poland years ago. It was like 11 or 12 years ago. He came to the embassy and

from what I understand, they told him, Mr. Weingarten, your Polish quota -- you deposited papers in this and this year, has finally matured. If you want, if you have a sponsor, you can go to United States within the next six months. My father came to us and he said listen, I got this letter and they said that I can now immigrate to America, but I'm too old and I'm not gonna start my life all over again. Your name is there, and Dahlia's name is there and Mama's name, anybody who wants to go -- you want to go, go. I don't know whether you can go, he says, but take this letter and go to the American embassy and see whether you have any rights at all. Well, a seed was planted in my mind. I said to my husband, you know what? Why don't we go and check out? Out of curiosity. We don't have to go, but let's go and see. Maybe we can go for a year, or two years, whatever it is, we don't have to sell anything. Why don't we just go and see? If it works, fine, if not, not. So I finally convinced him to go to -- to take the ride with me to Tel Aviv, to the consulate, because the embassy was -- was at the -- yeah, the embassy was in Tel Aviv, not in [indecipherable] in -- in -- in Tel Aviv, right. And we arrived there, a young couple and we -- I -- you know, with my broken English at the time, and he looked at us, the -- we -- we met with the consul. And the consul said, we -- he said, you are Anita Weingarten? Yes, I am Anita Weingarten. Well you -- you -- you have the right to go. You have the right like your father does, the same way. You are m -- but I -- you are married and you have a child, he said, we Americans do not separate families. I'll never forget that sentence. We will add your husband and your child to your quota, and in five months you can go. Three months I think he said even, I don't -- you know. Well, providing that you have somebody who can sponsor you so you don't fall on the American government as a burden. So I came, I said, listen Dad -- he said well, we have a cousin in Washington, Jake Schutzman. Write to him and see how he responds to it. So I

wrote him a letter, and he said, anything and everything that I can do for you, I will do. And we ended up in Washington.

Q: So you came, thinking --

A: In ’63.

Q: -- in ’63, possibly temporarily.

A: Absolutely, with the thought that we are not going to stay more than --

Q: Stay --

A: -- two years.

Q: -- two years.

A: Maybe, maybe, maximum five.

Q: Yeah.

A: That’s it.

Q: Yeah. And what was your -- what were your parents’ reactions to the fact?

A: My folks were pretty happy. His folks, especially his mother, very unhappy about it.

Q: Mm-hm. Now his -- your husband’s first name is?

A: Eliezer.

Q: As -- Eliezer’s father was from Boryslaw?

A: From -- his family was divorced.

Q: Oh.

A: His mother divorced and she remarried Holzman.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And -- but his father came from Poland.

Q: Oh.

A: His name was Baruch.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. And his mother came from Russia.

A: Russia, correct.

Q: Right.

A: And they --

Q: But -- but Eliezer was born in --

A: In Israel.

Q: In Israel.

A: In Herzliya, Israel, right, mm-hm.

Q: Right, right. Yeah.

A: So his mother was very unhappy about it.

Q: Yeah.

A: His stepfather, Holzman, you know, he said okay, well the kids want to try, you know, let them try, we're not gonna stop them, and so forth. For her it was very difficult because she had only one granddaughter, that was my daughter, and you know, removing her away and so forth, so that was difficult. But then -- since then it's the history.

Q: So you're here in -- in the United States. What did the United States represent to you at that point in your life?

A: Loved America from the very beginning.

Q: You did.

A: Yes, I did. It meant opportunity, freedom, huge country, and I loved it. I loved it.

Q: Did you -- did you speak English well at that point?

A: Spoke, you know, like a graduate of a seminar, but I -- I love languages and when we arrived here -- and of course with the help of my second cousin, Jake Schutzman, I immediately enrolled, with my certificates, I started taking courses at Baltimore Hebrew College, and they -- a professor -- the professors used to come to Washington, D.C. and give lectures and I started learning. I also listened to the radio. I repeated sentences when I turned on the television and I used to repeat after whoever appeared on television, whatever it was, I used to repeat the sentences. And learned the language.

Q: Did you fly from Israel to --

A: No, we took a boat.

Q: I ge --

A: Beca -- yeah, we took --

Q: Which boat was this?

A: Israhin.

Q: So it was an Israeli line?

A: Yeah, an Israeli line.

Q: And you docked in New York?

A: And we docked in New York, and --

Q: Did you see the Statue of Liberty?

A: Absolutely. And my ha --

Q: Was that an emotional experience?

A: Yes, it was, absolutely, because it was also my husband's birthday when we docked in New York. His 26th birthday in April. April 28th. And it was a very emotional -- now, my husband, when we arri -- when we -- you know, when we were planning to leave Israel, and before that we saw a movie called "West Side Story." And my husband said, is this America? That's what it looks like? I said, well I don't think all America is what you see in "West Side Story." So he was a little hesitant, you know, he said, what am I gonna do there, and I said don't worry, whatever -- we'll find what to do. We won't -- we won't be lost. And with that kind of attitude, you know, my cousin Jake Schutzman started looking for him to find him a job so he can, you know, find his way, and he did, you know, went in the evening, took courses in English and slowly, slowly progressed.

Q: And what kind of work did he do?

A: And he started -- actually, he worked for two companies. The first company that hired him, you know, when they told him to bring a certain tool he didn't understand exactly what they meant, so they he -- he brought another tool, and he didn't last there too long, they fired him, and he was very devastated because he was never fired before. But that's part of, you know, you -- you -- you acclimate yourself that way, that's part of life. And so then he worked for another gentleman, in fact the gentleman was a member of Beth El and I don't know what happened then, they fired him. And then I took the initiative into my own hands, opened the yellow pages, looked under heating and air conditioning and that was July, and we arrived in April. May, June, July, we were three months in Washington and I just figured out I'm going to cope, and I happened to land on a company named Dependo. And I called up and Mr. Blom answered the

phone, and I said, we are from Israel, we are here three months and my husband worked in this line in Israel, in refrigeration and so forth. He said, okay, send him in. And he went and he got the job and he worked there for seven years. And after seven years he decided well, time to go on my own. And since then, with another partner and they opened their own business, and then, you know, sometimes partnerships does -- doesn't always work well, and after, I think, two years or so they separated and my husband went on his own. And sine then has been on his own and has his own company.

Q: Did you have any more children?

A: Yes, I have a son here in America and he was born in 1976.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Exactly the same date like my father, April -- noth -- no, no, no, March 25th, '76, the bicentennial.

Q: Oh, right.

A: Bicentennial baby.

Q: And then did you work at all?

A: Oh, all the time, yes. I started working in 19, actually '63 in a --

Q: As a teacher?

A: As a substitute teacher at B'nai Israel, at the time it was on 16th Street. And then I got a job in Beth El the following year on Old Georgetown Road and I worked there for, I think, seven or eight years as a teacher, as a Hebrew teacher. And vis-à-vis I constantly studied through courses from Baltimore Hebrew College and got a degree there. And continued working -- later when we moved -- we lived in Silver Spring. At first we lived in Washington, D.C. for two years and then

we bought a town house in Silver Spring and we lived there for seven years. And after seven years we bought this house where we are in now, in Potomac. And I switched and I worked for Ha Shalom, vis-à-vis at the -- what is today Charles E. Smith's Jewish Day School. And I sent my daughter to that school. Prior to that it was called Solomon Schechter school and it was housed on East West highway at Ora Kodish and in Temple Shalom it was split and -- and I worked there for -- since '69 -- 1969 at Solomon Schechter and then it became Charles E. Smith's Jewish Day School. And worked with Hashalom for seven, eight years, then the last 20 years at Washington Hebrew congregation.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about what your thoughts and feelings are. What are your thoughts about Germany? Granted, you don't have direct memories of the war, but your life certainly was affected by it --

A: Yes --

Q: -- obviously.

A: -- absolutely. Right.

Q: What are your thoughts about Germans and Germany?

A: My thoughts are I'm sure that there were good people in Germany like in a -- any other country, es-especially at -- beginning when I was younger, of course I hated anything that had to do with Germany or Germans, even to a point that even when my husband says well, maybe we should go to Europe and go to Germany, I said I don't feel like going there. I said I don't want to buy any car that's made in -- in germa -- in -- you know, that has anything to do with the German manufacturing, or anything that it was manufactured in Germany. You know, some people buy Mercedeses and so I said no, this is not for us, and I was -- and I'm still, until today, not -- you

know. But I don't -- you know, there's no such thing really that I hate, cause I don't know what to hate there, or not to like there. But I feel that anti-Semitism still exists there and -- and -- and on the other hand, now that -- when you read, you know, it's 60 some years after the war, and you read the circumstances that brought Hitler to power, and the people that would not necessarily follow, or obey, or belong to the Jugenrat, or whatever it is, were immediately either punished or -- or -- you know, they were sentenced to death or they had -- they were not getting the rations or the food. So you -- you felt that those people were, in a sense pressured for their own survival, in order for them to survive, so they went with him and they wouldn't oppose him, because if they would, they would lose whatever they had. So, you know, it's from -- sometimes you wonder. Such a thing can happen all over again, and the question is, how would the population react? Would everybody worry just about himself or themselves and to heck with the rest of the world as long as I have my food and I have my job and I'm not being threatened? Then I, you know, so what do I care about this minority, that minority, whatever min -- it's very possible that this can, you know, that this -- that this is the reaction of maybe humanity, I don't know.

Q: Right, mm-hm. Do you consider yourself a survivor?

A: Absolutely, yes. Yes, I do. I consider myself a survivor thanks to that family that took me in. If not the family, I doubted whether I would survive.

Q: Mm-hm. I -- you se -- you said that professionally you've taught at different Hebrew schools --

A: Right, yeah.

Q: -- Jewish schools, but yet your parents were not religious. Did -- are you -- do you consider yourself religious or are you just teaching [indecipherable]

A: I am more --

Q: -- a Jewish history?

A: I am more of a Reformed Jew. I am not an Orthodox Jew, because that really doesn't speak to me. So, I believe in what is called live and let live. And I don't think that really by being an Orthodox Jew and -- and -- and doing everything the way the Orthodoxy does, that this is the only way. I believe that Judaism is much broader, much larger, and whether you follow exactly as the Torah tells you to follow, or the Talmud, that you are a better Jew than I am. I don't think so.

Q: Do you can -- how --

A: I keep Shabbat, I light the candles, I like the Jewish atmosphere. We celebrate the holidays. Whether I run to the synagogue to pray and think that the salvation will come from God? No, I believe it comes from you. And there is even a sentence in Hebrew, it says [speaks Hebrew here]. And ami is I. The emphasis is first on I. Not [speaks Hebrew], but on I. And that's what I believe that is. I, or an -- every individual really is responsible for his deeds and -- and you know.

Q: How would you describe yourself? Would you describe yourself as Jewish, American, Polish, Israeli?

A: Not -- no, not necessarily Polish. And I was thinking about it and sometimes I thought maybe a world citizen would be real nice. To be just a world citizen.

Q: So, have you --

A: But I feel very close to Israel, definitely I do. And I feel that Jews need to have their own homeland and not be spread all over. We should -- we have to have our own homeland, and if we want to live in other places in the world, that's fine, but we need to have a homeland at this point. If -- which is a Utopian thought, one day borders will be broken and people will -- you know, that's something far-fetched, into the long, long future. So at this point we need our homeland, we need our base.

Q: Have you gone back to Israel?

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Do you go back on a regular basis?

A: We -- we do, every year, every other year, yes, yes. In fact, we are planning now to go in October.

Q: And -- and your children consider themselves Israel --

A: Americans.

Q: Americans.

A: Americans, yes. They consider themselves Americans and they love Israel, because I have taken them couple times to Israel. They have been numerous times to the land of Israel. One of my granddaughter had the Bat Mitzvah. One of my granddaughter graduated Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School and went to Israel with them, and went prior to Israel. So they feel a bond with Israel, but they consider themselves American Jews.

Q: Have you been back to Poland?

A: No, I have not.

Q: Do you -- do you want to go back?

A: But I would like to. Now I would -- before I didn't have no desire whatsoever, but now I would like to, and I don't know if it comes with age, or -- I'd -- yeah --

Q: You would like to go back to Boryslaw, is --

A: Yeah, to see -- to see what -- well, Boryslaw is not going to be the same when it was 66 years ago, or 68 years ago, it's not the same. But I would like to see that.

Q: Why?

A: Well, because you know, my father was born there, my grandmother, my mother, I was born -- to see the birthplace, basically. To see what it looks like. And -- and -- and j -- you know, there is a picture here that I have, which I happened to enlarge, but you can see what Boryslaw looked like.

Q: Mm-hm, yeah.

A: So --

Q: Are you more comfortable around survivors than you are the people who didn't have to live through wartime?

A: No, I don't have that problem, no. What sometimes bothers me is the ignorance of -- of people and -- and you know, it's a -- and it's natural, the ignorance of -- of -- of not knowing, or not showing interest or -- or stuff like that, but I feel comfortable among those and among those, both. I don't -- I have an occasionally discussions and -- and when I mention sometimes, you know, a -- since I know the Jewish history well, and I know in every land where Jews lived eventually there was a persecution of the Jewish people, and if I mention nobody knows whether this is not going to happen in uni -- in America. Even though this is a free country and so forth,

we have no guarantee that this will not happen here. We don't know. Depends on population, depends on education. Many, many factors go into it.

Q: A-Are your parents still alive?

A: No, my -- both parents passed away.

Q: In Israel.

A: In Israel, right, yes.

Q: Did -- did they get reparations at all?

A: My father did and my stepmother did, yes, they did, right. And they claimed it helped them quite a bit to live in Israel. That it helped them toward their older age. They did.

Q: Do you think you would be a different person than you are today if you hadn't had to go through what you went through, being given to another family, living in Poland --

A: Most like -- yeah, probably I would be different if my -- yes.

Q: -- going to Israel. I mean, you didn't have a typical --

A: No.

Q: -- childhood that someone here --

A: Right, yes --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- yes. Very possible. You -- you're referring to the fact that if my father would not have survived?

Q: Well no, let's say if you were just born in this country?

A: Oh, of course would be different.

Q: Your -- you would be a different type of person, is what I'm saying. Your outlook would be --

A: Wa -- yes. I have a feeling yes, probably so.

Q: In what way?

A: In terms of education. I don't think that if my folks would have left, before the war, let's say, and immigrated to America and I would have been born here, most likely they would have acclimated themselves to the life in America and -- and you know, when I look -- for instance, I work in Washington Hebrew, so they have pictures from very early century when the synagogue was built by German Jews. And you see the kids graduating and so forth and -- and every year it says, this group graduated, that group graduated, '41 - '42 - '43 - '44. And then I think to myself, my God, on the other side of the ocean, what was going on? Were they aware what was going on? Did they do enough? See? So -- and I would probably fall in the same category.

Q: Mm-hm. So you think psychologically you would be a different person if you had grown up here?

A: Probably.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yes.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Most likely.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Probably maybe less sensitive to the whole issue of the suffering, maybe, of others. And -- and you know what -- and -- and even today, when we hear about Darfur, or we hear -- hear about others being repressed different parts of the world, you know, we say we pray for them, this and that, and what are we doing? Are we changing?

End of Tape Two, Side B

Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Anita Etzyon. This is tape three, side A. Do you think people today have learned any -- any lessons of the Holocaust? Is there anything happening today that concerns you?

A: Yes, conc -- there are a lot of things that are happening that concerns me. First of all, I see anti-Semitism on the rise. That concerns me. I don't know whether we are doing enough to stop it. I'm sure there are means to stop it, but we -- maybe we are ignoring it and thinking the wave will go away. That concerns me a great deal. What concerns me also is that the attitude toward the state of Israel, my feeling is, in United States, has changed from the time that we arrived 45 years ago, or 46 years ago, to what is happening today. It's not the same, it changed for the worse. And I don't know if this is a -- a propaganda by a lot of Muslim countries, and -- and -- and maybe anti-Semitism was kind of, you know, hidden and begins slowly to mushroom out. Maybe that hatred was there and somehow it -- it -- it -- it was either covered up, or maybe it has to do with the newer generation that sees things differently than the older generation. It -- it could be. What scares me that -- that what we hear today, we did not hear that 40 or 30 years ago. Whether it's in France, whether it's in -- in -- in Sweden, whether it's in -- in -- in Norway, Holland.

Q: Do you compare it to Germany in the 30's?

A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: In what way?

A: This -- this --

Q: People's reactions?

A: Yes, people -- I tell you what, another thing that worries me is also the economical situation, because when economy goes down, people are looking for scapegoats and through history we have seen that, that's what happens. Because the everyday person comes across -- so he comes across with the shopkeeper or the owner of -- of a bank, or the owner of a mall or the owner of a car dealer or whatever, and many times he finds Jewish people in this -- in these areas. And -- and -- and the hatred begins to boil. I don't know how to tell you but I just want to give you an example. I had a girl from the Philippines that came and helped me, and they were hardly here a year, and her remark was -- she hardly knew anybody and her remark was, oh, all Jewish people are rich. And I said no, that's not true, not all Jewish people are rich. Jewish people, they are ready to work, they are resourceful and they don't sit and wait for manna from heaven to fall. You know, not all Jewish people are rich, that's wrong. But I just -- that's -- that's the perception. And what I find out with the younger generation now, scares me. The younger generation scares me.

Q: In their sense of lack of awareness?

A: Lack of awareness, lack of knowledge, easy to blame. It does. And I'll give you an example. Yesterday I heard a story of a child, and I don't want to mention names, who went to a camp over summer and there were -- he was put with another kid. It's -- it wasn't just only a Jewish camp, it was a camp for Jews and everybody else. And there was another child in his bunk who was not Jewish -- and we are talking about 11 year old kid, who said to the Jewish kid, he said, all Jews should die. Now where does an 11 year old child come with such a statement? He must have heard it at home, or in the surrounding that he comes from. So the father mentioned that the Jewish kid slugged him, gave him a beating for it, you know. And -- and it shows you that 11

year old kid today, you know, like -- so are we reversing? What's happening? I wish I would have an answer for all that, but I really don't. But I'm very sensitive to it, I guess more than others.

Q: Because?

A: Because my family experienced it.

Q: Right. What are your thoughts when you enter the Holocaust Museum in Washington? Or -- have you been there?

A: Oh yes, yes, I have been there. Depressing. Yeah, very depressing.

Q: Whe -- wh-where --

A: Emotionally, yeah.

Q: Mm-hm. Do you feel it's necessary to have that kind of a museum?

A: Absolutely, yes, very much so. Yeah.

Q: But -- for educational pur --

A: For educational purposes, for the second generation, because what happened, you know, things are forgotten, as the years pass by. And we know for instance that some leaders of countries deny the whole idea of Holocaust, it never existed, like Ahmadinejad. And what bothers me very much, that those very, very ultra-Orthodox Jews side with him and say there is no need for the state [indecipherable] the Messiah will arrive. And I don't know how long, but if he would have crawled already, he would have been here, right? So I don't know when the Messiah will arrive. But yeah, def-definitely there is a need.

Q: Do you feel that what you went through as a young child, and all your childhood is the defining event of who you are, the defining element of who you are?

A: Oh yes. Yeah, I think so. Yeah, I think it's a defining [indecipherable] yes.

Q: You said it's made you more sensitive, you did say that.

A: Right. Yes.

Q: And then the other ways tha --

A: More aware of different situations. Stronger, in a sense that I don't give in so quickly. I -- I don't know if it's inborn or -- or -- or whatever I -- I like to achieve. I set a goal, I go after it. I don't back out or -- or feel oh, I can't do it, or whatever. I guess that's it, basically.

Q: Do you think about your childhood often?

A: I do from time to time, but not that often. I don't dwell on it. I'm trying not to dwell on it, because you know, if I'll start dwelling on it and I'll become really a miserable human being and I don't want that. And so --

Q: Mm-hm. What was your reaction during the Eichmann trial? Do you remember that?

A: Yes, yes, yes. Eichmann trial we were here already, in United States.

Q: Right.

A: Yes. I -- you know what I mem -- now that you brought it up, I remember looking at him sitting in that glass booth, he looked to me like a nebbish nothing. And yet, I thought to myself, one human being like that, look much harm he did. And -- and -- and -- and what kind of -- you know some -- I -- what kind of thoughts he had when he did what he did? What kind of feeling or attitude, or did he have any pity, or -- for others? No, you didn't see that. I don't know, I just -- you know. I didn't even feel such hatred toward him because he looked so nebbish to me, you know? But then, when you think about it, were those people in those position emotionally [indecipherable] people, when you think about it, that they needed that boost, for being so

important and having this power in their hands that their heads were totally -- I don't know, the brain was totally screwed up that they could do that to others? How could you explain it?

Q: Speaking of how to explain things, in raising your children --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- did you talk about your past --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- did you bring -- was this a big element in the raising of your children?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: In what ways?

A: But i -- you know, I used to tell them that, but I didn't want them, especially my daughter when she was young, you know, to feel, you know, to feel constant sorrow or -- or -- or seeing her mother being depressed, or what. So I really didn't -- I did and did not put such emphasis when she was younger. But she heard the stories ha -- you know, my childhood, she knew about that, yeah, and my growing up and so forth. So they know it and my grandchildren as well. They were very fascinated. They always used to come when they were younger, and Grandma tell us, so what did you do and -- and do you remember, did you have friends? You know, the little things that little children ask.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Things like that. And you know, they -- th-they know that I'm a survivor. They know that I am a child that survived the war.

Q: Are you a member of any of the hidden children groups?

A: I was at the beginning. There wa -- I remember they started it here in Washington some time, but then I did not pursue because I worked in the evenings and I couldn't always attend to the meetings and --

Q: You had said that you now -- you hadn't thought of, or you weren't thinking about going back to Poland, but now you -- you may --

A: Yeah.

Q: So do -- are you -- as you've gotten older, do you think more about your childhood than you did?

A: Oh yes, yes, absolutely, yeah. Ye -- I would like to see that birthplace of mine, and also see what kept my father not wanting to leave Boryslaw or -- or Poland at all. And -- and sometimes I wonder, was it fear? Because I did the opposite of him. I was 20 -- not quite 23 - 24 when I came to United States, 23 and my husband was 26, with a child, and I was not afraid of changing, trying something new. I don't know, maybe I was stupid, that -- that I have no clue. Young. But I was not afraid, I always thought, you know what? We'll make it. Not -- things will be okay. And always had this positive feeling of self assurance or whatever it is. And -- and I wasn't afraid.

Q: Is your sister still in --

A: In Israel --

Q: In Israel.

A: -- yes, yes, she is.

Q: And is she able to come to visit you here?

A: Oh yeah, she came couple times to visit me here, absolutely and we go and visit there, right.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm. And when you were an adult, did you talk more with your parents about the war time?

A: No.

Q: Why not?

A: Because they wouldn't bring up that subject and whenever I started asking -- and also keep in mind that I came in '63 to United States.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So that was really not a subject that they wanted to talk about because they themselves, especially my father, used to get very emotional about it. And so not to aggravate him, or cause --

Q: Get emotional about the war, or --

A: The war and his life and everything that took place and you know, the whole thing, so it used to bring him, apparently memories that he didn't want to deal with. So not really, not much.

Q: Mm-hm. Were they able to come visit you here?

A: Yes, they did, they came couple times here, and we tried to talk about it and -- you know.

Q: Did they consider moving to --

A: No, no, no, they were too old to do that. And you know, they were settled in their ways already in Israel and in their lifestyle and so forth. But I have a feeling that my father regretted the fact that he didn't move to United States when he was younger. When he came over and he saw, you know and -- for the first time America so to speak and I had a feeling. He didn't -- never verbalized it, but I sensed that he regretted the fact that he didn't have the opportunity to make it in a younger age.

Q: When you were -- when he --

A: Not -- not when he was 60 something, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: But learning another language, as it was, he had difficulties learning Hebrew, so English, and --

Q: They eventually learned Hebrew?

A: They did, but they still continued communicating either in German or Polish, yeah. Right.

Q: Well, yeah, be -- before we close --

A: Mm-hm.

Q: -- is there any message you wanted to leave to your grandchildren? Anything you wanted to say special to them?

A: Well, special to them, I hope that they will be able to listen to the tape and go and visit the museum and -- and study and -- and learn and you know, they are young, but they -- eventually as they get older, I'm sure they will, you know. A certain maturity comes with age. So that's what I would like to see, that they should study, be aware of their surroundings and also be aware of anti-Semitism. That's what I would like to make sure that they do.

Q: Right. Well, that's a very important note to end on. Is there anything else you wanted to add be-before we close?

A: You know, what I find out is that -- well, maybe now there is a more a-awakening among the Jewish population toward the Holocaust and so forth, because I remember that some families were saying no, don't teach it to our children. We don't want them to hear those terrible things, you know, that happened. They're too young, they're too this. You know, like not experiencing

it, or -- or even through stories and so forth. It's too sad. That's an -- I don't think it's such a good idea.

Q: You think it should be taught.

A: I think so, yes, yes. I think so. And that's the way I -- you know, that's how I feel.

Q: Mm-hm. Well thank you very much --

A: You're welcome.

Q: -- for doing this interview. This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Anita Etzyon.

End of Tape Three, Side A

Conclusion of Interview